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ABSTRACT

Because of widespread disillusion with suspension as a discipline procedure, school officials are developing inschool alternative programs. Institution of such a program must begin with reflection about how current disciplinary programs are succeeding or failing. The primary purposes of the program must include helping the child and identifying the root problems of disciplinary offenses. The referral must be sufficiently documented, afford due process rights, and last no more than three days without a review. The alternative facility must be removed from normal traffic patterns and provide appropriate study materials. The carefully selected staff must include individuals who want to work in the program with children who have problems and who can relate well with problem youngsters of different classes and cultures. The program must be well understood by the regular faculty and parents. The program must include high quality academic instruction and individual or group counseling that aims to involve the student in confronting and solving the reasons for the root problem. The program must have access to the school system's support services and provide a mechanism for following up the student's subsequent progress. Finally, the alternative must be carefully monitored and evaluated. (Author/JM)

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DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE IN-SCHOOL ALTERNATIVES TO SUSPENSION

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Let me say at the beginning that the subject of designing and implementing in-school alternatives to suspension is broad and requires a more extensive discussion than is possible because of the time constraints imposed on this presentation. Therefore, this paper is somewhat sketchy and does not fully develop the many considerations that should be kept in mind in developing in-school alternatives.

During the past several years the frequent use and abuse of short-term[1],out-of-school suspensions as a disciplinary technique used by public school administrators has come under increasing scrutiny and criticism. A number of authoritative reports at the local, state, and national level have documented the reasons for such suspensions and the extent to which they are used.[2] The word "suspension" has started to take on a connotation of opprobrium that is an embarrassment to schools rather than to students. The sensitivity of some school officials to the disrepute of suspensions has even given rise to a euphemistic nomenclature which seems designed to obfuscate the practice of disciplinary exclusions. But whether the practice of temporarily barring children from attending school as a response to real or perceived cases of misbehavior is called "three day removal," "class closure," or "sending the student home for the remainder of the day," the result is still the suspension of students from school.

The current reaction to the widespread use of suspensions has been prompted by a variety of new perceptions, analyses, and pressures. Among these are:

-- An awareness that suspending students from school for attendance offenses ("truancy," "cutting class," "excessive tardiness," "leaving campus without permission") is an irrational and ineffective disciplinary response which only compounds the problems of absence from school;

-- An understanding that suspension is not the most effective or productive response to a range of non-violent, non-overtly disruptive offenses such as "smoking," "disrespect," "use of abusive language," "insubordination," or, as in one school district, "public affection;"

-- Pressures from law enforcement officials and juvenile court judges who have complained that suspended students frequently get into trouble in the community when they are unsupervised and uninvolved in constructive activity;[3]

-- A realization by school officials that students who are suspended from school are not counted in the average daily attendance, and that such cumulative absences jeopardize a school district's anticipated level of state financial aid (where state aid formulas are based on ADA);

-- Findings that minority, culturally different students, and students from low-income families are more likely to be suspended at a rate significantly disproportionate to the percentage of their enrollment among all students attending school;

-- An acknowledgement by school administrators that short-term, out-of-school suspensions have too often been used as a convenient and simplistic response to a complex set of problems which may be the shared responsibility of school personnel, the student, and the student's family and community;

-- Criticisms by parents and community groups that school officials are abdicating their responsibilities to students when they remove students from school without first using a range of techniques and services to identify and remedy the problems responsible for the commission of the real or perceived disciplinary offense;

-- Experiences that suggest suspensions are not the best method for communicating with parents about the behavior of their children, or for enlisting parental support for the discipline goals of the school;

-- Evidence that suspensions are now so inappropriately used that they are not a deterrent to student misbehavior, that they do not instill self-discipline, and that they do not insure student misbehavior will not recur.

As a result of the above, and many other concerns, school officials are making greater efforts to develop and utilize

disciplinary responses which do not exclude students from school. The generic term, "in-school alternatives to suspension" may describe many different kinds of efforts to deal within the school with student disciplinary offenses that would have formerly resulted in out-of-school suspension. Such efforts may be informal and ad hoc, or they may be formal and highly organized, but they are all predicated on a sonscious decision not to utilize short-term, out-of-school suspensions as a response to certain student offenses. While such a decision may represent a sincere effort to reduce or eliminate out-of-school suspensions, it should be recognized that the decision also represents a de facto admission by school officials that they are unable or unwilling to successfully initiate and execute the kinds of preventive instructional, organization, and management strategies which will minimize the manifestations of inappropriate behavior by students. The decision to develop in-school alternatives is at least a recognition of the harm and futility of out-of-school suspensions, and hopefully it is predicated on an intention to better serve students. But it also means that all of the knowledge. discussion, curriculum, workshops, conferences, publications and professional rehtoric focusing on the why and how of meeting the educational and human needs of individual students have either been inappropriately applied or havehad limited impact in many local schools and individual classrooms. In-school alternatives can be a valuable step towards better meeting students' needs but they must not be allowed to deter or replace more fundamental educational efforts which will prevent the kinds of behavior to which in-school alternatives are

following is page 4a

a response.

It is not the purpose of this paper to describe the many types of in-school alternatives to suspension, that information is readily available elsewhere and school officials who are considering the development of alternatives should make use of those resources.[4] However, just because a disciplinary practice carries the label of an "in-school alternative to suspension" it cannot be assumed the needs of children are being better served or that it represents a qualitative improvement over previous disciplinary practices. Any disciplinary practice, including an in-school alternative, can be misused and later in this paper we will set forth a number of criteria that must be met if an in-school alternative is to be judged as positive.

A committment to design and implement an effective in-school alternative to suspension necessarily implies a recognition of the negative consequences of the frequent use of out-of-school suspensions. Because it is an opportunity for a new beginning, it is important for the development of any in-school alternative to be preceded by a period of <u>reflection</u> and <u>thought</u>.

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The process of reflection should represent an effort to assess the purpose, practice, and effect of the use of suspensions. That process might be facilitated if administrators take the time to arrive at honest and thoughtful answers to the following questions:

Why has our school used out-of-school suspensions?

In what ways have out-of-school suspensions limited our ability to help students and solve problems related to school discipline?

What group(s) has borne the consequences of our use of out-of-school suspensions, and why? What has been the impact of those suspensions on the persons affected?

How have we monitored and evaluated the effect of our use of out-of-school suspensions?

What have been the effects of our use of out-of-school suspensions we do not want to repeat in other disciplinary efforts?

To what extent has our school's use of out-of-school suspensions been at our own discretion (as opposed to suspensions mandated by school board policy or district office directives)?

What has been our experience regarding the relationship between the behavior of school personnel and the behavior of students? How have we accepted the responsibility for remedying the inappropriate behavior of individuals from both groups?

How do parents, teachers, and students perceive the system of discipline within the school? What are their attitudes and expectations regarding discipline? How do these relate to my own philosophy and practice?

The answers to these questions may provide some understanding and insight from which valuable lessons may be drawn and applied to the development of an in-school suspension alternative. On the other hand, developing an alternative in the absence of such reflection may mean the mistakes of the past will re-emerge in a new guise to corrupt the intended benefits of the alternative.

School officials who are developing in-school alternatives to suspension should make sure their efforts are based on a solid philosophical foundation. If they believe the primary purpose of the alternative is to punish students, or to control students, or to modify the behavior of the students, then it is unlikely the long-term results of the alternative will differ much from the results of other disciplinary practices conceived within a similar philosophical framework. Again, however, the development of an in-school alternative provides an opportunity to reassess past assumptions and practices and to take a different approach.

The problem with many disciplinary practices is that they are designed more as an expedient response to real or perceived student misbehavior than as an effort to identify and remedy the cause(s) of the behavior. The maintenance of authority, control, and status too often determine the nature of the disciplinary response, frequently to the exclusion of helping the child or solving the problem which is at the root of the child's misbehavior symptom. Such responses not only result in ineffective disciplinary practices but they can lead to a school official's abuse of power.

In-school suspension alternatives should be developed for the purposes of (1) helping the child, (2) identifying and remedying the root problem(s) responsible for the real or perceived comission of a disciplinary offense, (3) helping students develop self-discipline, (4) gaining knowledge about the factors contributing to discipline-related problems and initiating preventive measures to reduce those problems, (5) eliminating the use of out-of-school disciplinary suspensions for all offenses except those which clearly threaten the security of the school community, and (6) providing a framework within which school personnel can work on achieving the first five goals while enabling the majority of the students in the school to continue to participate, without interruption, in the school's instructional process.

Certainly these are goals based on a philosophy that discipline in the schools goes beyond issues of punishment and control, and that suggests school officials have an extensive responsibility to students. But unless the goals of an in-school

suspension alternative are developed on this or a similar philosophical base, the potential of the alternative may not be fully realized.

It is important to recognize that the objective of an in-school alternative must not be restricted to merely reducing the number of out-of-school suspensions. Detention programs which address none of the other goals stated above have succeeded in achieving the limited objective of keeping students in school, but it is highly questionable whether students have really been helped or whether future problems have been prevented. In-school alternatives to suspension which result only in students sitting in a room is an irresponsible management technique which, in the long term, is not likely to help either the student or the school.

Such a misuse of an in-school alternative also provides a convenient means for ignoring the fact that the student may be only one factor in the root problem responsible for the student's real or perceived misbehavior. It does little good to involve a student in an in-school alternative if there is a prejudgment it is always the student's misbehavior which needs to be modified. School officials must be willing to come to grips with the fact that the root problem of a student's misbehavior may also be found, in whole or in part:

-- in how a teacher manages his/her classroom or relates to students;

-- in the hasty judgments of school personnel whose reactions are based on partial information or on

cultural/racial stereotypes or on his/her personal values;

-- in a range of other school-related, peer-related, home-related, or community-related factors.

While school officials are often willing to acknowledge the role of peers and the student's family as possible contributors to the student's misbehavior, they are less frequently willing to acknowledge or address school-related factors. If in-school alternatives perpetuate the inclination to modify the student's misbehavior symptom, but do not provide a context for identifying and remedying the root cause of the problem--wherever it is found and whomever it involves--then the alternatives will represent "discipline as usual" for the student and the school.

If an in-school alternative is to provide a framework within which problems are to be solved--not merely ignored, misclassified, or removed from the classroom--then school officials must be committed to developing an alternative that permits the program staff to make an objective analysis of what the problem really is and gives them the power and support to deal with it. If the misbehaviors of peers, teachers, administrators, and parents are found to be a major factor leading to student misbehavior, then those behaviors must be addressed. This should be done even when recognizing and confronting such behaviors threatens the status quo of the power relationships and the political dynamics in the school community. Of course it must be recognized that peers, teachers, administrators, and parents--like students--are prone to human error and bad judgment. Like students, they

often need help in identifying the source of the problem and confronting their own role in it.

The design of an in-school alternative should reflect both an ambition to deal more substantively and successfully with student misbehavior, and a sense of realism based on an intimate knowledge of students' needs, and the informal and formal structures and relationships in the schools. This means teachers, administrators, students, and parents should be involved in designing the in-school alternative. It is essential for this planning process to be deliberate and thoughtful, and for all the participants to be well informed about various alternative models.

Designers of an in-school alternative to suspension should consider the following major components:

Criteria and Procedures for Referral

The in-school alternative should not be viewed as the solution to every case of a student's misbehavior in the classroom, nor should it be assumed that the referral of the student to the alternative is the best response to every violation of the school rules. If in-school alternatives result in removing and isolating students from the regular classrooms and if that process is easy and convenient for the classroom teacher, then there is the temptation for the teacher or administrator to abdicate his/her responsibility for effective discipline in the classroom and the school. Therefore, there must be a clear statement of the circumstances under which a referral to the in-school alternative is appropriate and the procedure for making the referral. This statement must be communicated to the school's staff, students, and parents in writing.

It is also wise to designate a specific person to be the "gatekeeper" of the in-school alternative. This administrator or other school staff member should be the person who screens all referrals to the alternative in order to determine if such referrals are appropriate and necessary to solve the root problem. Such an individual must not assume a role of "processing" referrals, as some assistant principals have processed out-of-school suspensions in an assembly-line fashion. Further, this "gatekeeper" must have the authority to evaluate the need for and the wisdom of the student's referral to the alternative based on a pre-assignment investigation involving conversations with the student, his/her parents, and the referring educator. This person should be empowered to assign or not assign the student to the in-school alternative and, when appropriate, to recommend the use of less formalized alternatives which would more likely meet the student's needs and more quickly return him/her to the regular classroom.

A referral to an in-school alternative must be accompanied by sufficient documentation to justify the referral. The documentation should state what incident or behavior prompted the referral and what efforts were made to identify and solve the problem prior to referral. A teacher's written suggestions or comments to facilitate the identification and solution of the problem responsible for the referral should also be solicited.

As another part of the referral process, students should be afforded the minimal due process rights outlined in Goss v. Lopez before the assignment takes place. The student should be advised as to why the assignment has been recommended, and should

have an opportunity to present his/her side of the story. This conversation may also provide clues about the root causes of the problem. Such a procedure is simply good administrative practice, and it may have the added benefit of providing some legal protection for the school system and its personnel.[5]

Length of Assignment

If one assumes that many in-school alternatives will take the form of assigning students to a separate facility within the regular school, the issue of how long the student will stay there becomes very important. In most cases an assignment of from one to three days will probably be sufficient to work with the student, to try and identify the problem, and to initiate a process for effectively dealing with the problem. No student should stay in the program for more than three days without a review of his/her progress during the first three days. Any recommendation that the student remain in the program beyond three days should be accompanied by documentation detailing the rationale for the recommendation, an explanation of the activities and services proposed for the student, and what is to be accomplished during the remaining days. The review process should include an examination and discussion of this documentation in a meeting of the referring teacher or administrator, the person who assigned the student to the program, the student and his/her parents, and any members of the in-school suspension staff. Of course, under no circumstances should a student ever be in the program for more than seven days without a full due process hearing.

In-School Program Facilities

If the assignment of a student to a specific place within the school building for a specific period of time is part of the in-school alternative, attention needs to be given to the location of this facility. It may be a classroom that is not in use, a portable classroom, or even a converted storage area. One school even set up a program in an unused area behind the stage. Regardless of what kind of facility is used, it should be somewhat removed from the normal traffic patterns within the school. This serves several purposes. It provides the social isolation which can sometimes motivate students to "get their act together" and complete their stay in the program so they can resume their social role in the regular school environment.[6] It also removes the facility from curiosity-seekers among other students and decreases the chances of undesired interruptions. It can spare students some embarrassment since they are not seen going in or out of the in-school suspension facility.

The facility should probably be an austere setting which does not provide the visual stimulation usually found in normal classrooms. Chairs, desks or study carrels, book cases, and file cabinets are all that is required. However, students should have access to study materials and aids that would otherwise be available to them in the regular classroom. If there are students who are assigned to the facility primarily because of misbehavior symptoms resulting from serious academic problems, the facility should also include programmed instructional materials, and books and other materials specifically geared to the academic level of

the students. If the experience of the in-school suspension program begins to reveal that many students assigned to it are there because of academic problems, it may be necessary to change the in-school alternative to one which is more clearly designated as a skill development center.[7] In that case the facility would be different than the one described here because the emphasis would be on academic remediation rather than on discipline.

Staff Selection and Responsibilities

There is no more crucial aspect of developing an in-school alternative to suspension than selecting the staff who will work with the students assigned to the program. The development of the alternative must not be seen as an opportunity to reassign an undesirable teacher from a regular classroom to the alternative program. Instead, the staff of the program must be selected from individuals who:

-- want to work with the program;
-- want to work with children who have problems;
-- have demonstrated their ability to work successfully with youngsters with problems;
-- can relate well to youngsters with a variety of class and cultural orientations;
-- are more interested in identifying and solving real problems than in merely responding to or modifying misbehavior symptoms;
-- are patient, caring, and committed to students.

If possible, certification criteria should be a secondary consideration. It is more important for the prospective staff member to be able to communicate with troubled students, to have strong diagnostic and instructional skills, and to have the energy and imagination to utilize a variety of school and community resources to help solve problems.[8]

The interview and selection process of the staff for the program could be aided by creating a special selection panel. The panel should include administrators and teachers who are experienced and successful in working with the types of students who may be assigned to the in-school alternative program. The panel must make it clear to the applicants why the program is being initiated, the goals and objectives of the program, what support the staff will have from the school system, what authority the staff will have, and an indication of the school system's commitment to the program.

Staff for the alternative program can be expected to have many different responsibilities. Aside from supervising students in the program they will have to provide counseling opportunities for students and work to establish a personal rapport with them. The staff will have to assist students with academic assignments and be sensitive to possible learning problems which may become apparent in working with the student. It will also be necessary for staff to make judgments as to when students could profit from utilizing school or community-based services, and then to facilitate the student's use of those services.

It is probable that staff members will also have to relate to members of the student's family and possibly visit his/her home. In other words, the staff member must be able and willing to be resourceful and flexible in responding to a broad range of student needs.

Relation of Certificated Personnel to Alternative Program

Another important dimension of the in-school alternative program is how it is perceived by regular classroom teachers and school administrators, and how they relate to it. It is critical that the regular school personnel understand the philosophy behind the program, why it has been created, and how it will work. The best chance for gaining the understanding and support of such personnel is to make special efforts at the very initial stages of the planning to discuss the concept with them, receive their views and suggestions, and incoroporate their ideas into the program when appropriate. How the program operates, regardless of how it is defined or how the administration thinks it should operate, will depend on the degree to which it is understood and supported by the regular school staff.

Alternative programs which involve temporarily assigning students to a separate facility in the school will necessitate teachers sending a student's daily assignment to the staff of the alternative program. This assignment may be the same as given to other students, or it may be tailored so as to be more intensive and to require more activities of the student who is assigned to the alternative. In either case there will have to

be a close working relationship between the classroom teacher and the staff of the alternative program.

Teachers and administrators may also have to work with the alternative program staff to assist them in identifying and correcting the root problem responsible for the student's misbehavior. This will take time and it may not always be a pleasant experience since the teacher or the administrator may be part of the problem. For this reason the regular school personnel need to understand that the alternative program staff have the strong support of school district officials, and that there is an expectation classroom teachers will cooperate with the program's staff. As a part of its commitment to provide comprehensive support to the staff, the school district should be prepared to provide in-service training, counseling, and other assistance to school personnel who are unwilling or unable to recognize and remedy the role they play in stimulating or aggravating student misbehavior.

Parents and the Alternative Program

It is also necessary for the staff of the alternative program to involve the parents of students in discussion about and an analysis of a student's behavior. This may be a long and difficult process that may require home visitations. But it is vital for parents to know as much as possible about why their child is in the alternative program and what the program is trying to do for the student. A routine process of involving parents can also provide a way to educate parents about the

reasons for and substance of the school's expectations of the student's behavior. There can be no substitute for direct, face-to-face contact between the staff of the alternative program and parents of students in the program. This component of the program is essential to its success.

Content of In-School Alternative Programs

Certainly it should be made clear that if students are in an alternative program which temporarily removes them from the regular class, they must receive a quality of instruction comparable or superior to that they would otherwise receive. Such instruction should be at a level appropriate for the student. Any tests or other important work being given in the student's regular classroom should also be available to the student in the in-school alternative program. Thus, the student who is in the alternative program should not be academically penalized or be permitted to do nothing in the program. The academic component of the alternative program should be more rigorous, more challenging, more appropriate, and more rewarding than in the regular classroom.

The staff of the alternative program must be vigilant for students' academic problems resulting from learning handicaps, inadequate previous preparation in the lower grades, inappropriate instruction, or the use of inappropriate materials. Solving these problems may require more time and resources than are at the disposal of the alternative program staff. Therefore, some program to aid the student with these problems will have to be prescribed

after a process of teacher consultation, a formal assessment of the student's achievement level, a review of the student's academic history, and an intensive diagnosis of the student's learning process problems which need special attention. A plan to solve the student's academic problems should be developed, shared with and explained to the student and his/her parents, and carefully monitored.

The in-school alternative should also include a component which involves individual or group counseling. Unless there is some opportunity to work with students - and even parents, peers, and teachers - within the context of a counseling model it is unlikely the root problem of the student's misbehavior will be identified, or that the student will be successfully involved in its solution.

The specific counseling approach utilized will depend on the theoretical framework within which the in-school alternative has been organized. While approaches using behavior modification, reality therapy, values clarification, Adlerian psychology, and transactional analysis are employed by many programs, the model should be consistent with the goals set forth earlier in this paper. Accordingly, it is not appropriate to use counseling models which manipulate the student or which start from the assumption that it is only the <u>student's</u> behavior that needs to be modified. Approaches which tend to mask or misidentify the root problem should be avoided. The object of the in-school alternative program is not to produce a passive, adaptive student or to pound the round peg into the square hole. The in-school alternative

program should not be a forum in which counseling techniques have the effect of denigrating the student's culture or community. Rather, the purpose of counseling in the alternative program should be (1) to involve the student in identifying and assuming some responsibility for solving the root problem responsible for his/her misbehavior, (2) to assist the student in confronting the reasons for his/her own misbehavior, and that of others, (3) to assist the student in analyzing the relationship between his/her behavior and his/her short and long term self-interest, and (4) to assist the student in accepting responsibility for and in learning how to manage his/her behavior and to cope more responsibly with the behavior of others.

Support Services for the Alternative Programs

While the in-school alternative program may be somewhat separate from the activities of the regular school program, its staff must have access to the school system's support services. In developing the program, thought must be given to how such school personnel as psychologists, attendance workers, special education consultants, counselors, community relations staff, ombudspersons and transportation supervisors will relate to the alternative program staff in order to assist them in working with students. Attention should also be given to establishing contact with and involving individuals from such community-based agenci as legal aid offices, mental health centers, community centers, churches, social service agencies, and the like.

These school and community support personnel must also

understand the purpose and method of operation of the alternative program. They should know what is expected of them and meet regularly with the alternative program staff. If the alternative program staff are to effectively utilize these support services, it will be necessary for them to develop personal working relationships with the personnel in order to have their cooperation and understanding when they are asked to become involved in helping a particular student. In all cases the staff of the alternative program should serve as the advocate for the students with whom they are working, both to assure that the support personnel provide prompt and quality service and to protect the student's interests. In no case should a student simply be "turned over" to the school or community support personnel.

Follow-Up

Once a student leaves the in-school alternative program it is important to have some process of follow-up to determine how the student is getting along in regular classes. One component of this follow-up should be to determine how successful the in-school alternative has been in helping solve the root problems of the student's misbehavior. One approach is to use a form or card which enables each teacher the student sees throughout the course of the normal school day to indicate how the student is getting along in class. This is turned in to a school administrator, with a copy to the alternative program staff, at the end of each school day. Short-term support from the alternative program staff may be necessary if this procedure indicates the student is continuing

to have some problem.

It may also be wise to plan some follow-up counseling sessions so the student will be able to provide feedback as to how he/she is doing. It is preferable for the in-school alternative to be organized so that its "alumni" can take the initiative to temporarily (two hours or less) return to the program for follow-up counseling with any member of the program's staff with whom the student has developed a special rapport. Such a follow-up session should be available to the student at any time during the school day on an emergency basis, and should be preceded by the student's notification of an appropriate teacher or administrator that the student is returning to the program.

Funding

The extent to which additional funding may be required to provide the services and staff for an in-school alternative program depends largely on how creatively an administrator uses the services and staff already available to him/her, and how many students may be involved in the program. It should not be assumed that an in-school alternative cannot be implemented without additional funding. Before such a conclusion is reached school officials should think carefully about what kind of arrangements could be made using available staff.

If additional resources are required, there are a number of possible sources for funds. In those school districts where superintendents and school boards are thought to be sympathetic

to the goals of the in-school alternative, they should be asked to provide local funds to support the program. In other school districts, it may be necessary to seek outside funding if that seems to be the only strategy for getting the program established. The Emergency School Aid Act can provide funds to eligible districts for a range of services and personnel if the districts meet the program's criteria. Title IV-C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act can also provide funds. Some staff for the alternative program may be funded through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act is the only Federal legislation which specifically provides funds to "prevent unwarranted and arbitrary suspensions..."[9]

Monitoring and Evaluating the Alternative Program

The in-school alternative should be carefully monitored and evaluated at regular intervals throughout the school year in order to determine if it is achieving its intended purposes. The following questions may provide a useful framework for determining the success of the program:

-- Has the program actually resulted in a significant reduction in the number of out-of-school disciplinary suspensions? (Compare suspension data from prior to the implementation of the alternative program with data for a comparable period of time while the program has been in operation.)

-- What does data concerning referrals and assignments to the alternative program reveal? (Compile data which includes information on the race, sex, grade level of students referred to the program; which compares the number and types of students referred to those actually assigned to the alternative program; which reveals the number of referrals made by individual teachers or administrators; which indicates how many students spent how many days in the alternative program; which cites the reasons students were referred and/or assigned to the program; and which provides information on the number and types of students who were referred and/or assigned to the alternative program during a given period of time.)

-- Have students involved in the in-school alternative program significantly increased their academic, social (coping, inter-personal skills), and attendance success as a result of having participated in the program?

-- Has the alternative program resulted in students developing greater self-discipline (as manifest by students not being assigned to the alternative more than once)?

-- Has the alternative program resulted in more parents being involved in the disciplinary process?

-- Has the alternative served a broad range of students (by sex, race, socio-economic background, etc.) who have violated school rules, rather than served only one group identified as "the discipline problem"?

-- Has the alternative served only those students most in need or has it been excessively used as a disciplinary response? (Check to see if the number of students participating in the in-school alternative is equal to or more than the number of students formerly receiving out-of-school suspensions.)

The monitoring and evaluation of the alternative program should involve the program staff, classroom teachers, administrators, and a representative from the district office. The assessment should result in a report which includes the kind of data indicated above, relevant anonymous case histories, and comments from school personnel, students, and parents. An interim report of this type certainly should be prepared at the conclusion of each semester the alternative program is in operation; a more extensive report which also includes cumulative data and a thorough analysis of the program's impact and deficiencies should be prepared at the end of each school year.

This paper has outlined some of the qualitative parameters that should be considered in designing and implementing an in-school alternative to suspensions. It is now a truism in American education that the quality of any given program is largely dependent

upon the commitment of those who plan the program, and the leadership and energy which they bring to its implementation. That is also the case with in-school alternatives to suspension. In-school alternatives will not work for the benefit of students if they are implemented grudgingly or if they are supervised by individuals who do not believe in the philosophy upon which the program is based.

What has been outlined in this paper is not a panacea for all discipline-related problems in public schools. It will not eliminate the damage that can be caused by the inappropriate disciplinary responses of educators who are not adequate to the task of relating to students with problems.[10] But with careful planning, and guided and implemented by skilled educators, an in-school alternative program can result in more effectively meeting the discipline needs of students and schools.

FOOTNOTES

1. Ten consecutive school days, or less.

2. Children Out of School in Ohio, by The Citizens' Council for the Ohio Schools, 1977. (Available for $2.00 from the Citizens' Council/517 The Arcade/Cleveland, Ohio 44114.)

   "Close-Out Report" of the Special Student Concerns Project/ Bureau of Technical Assistance/Louisiana State Department of Education, prepared by Eugene Limar and Lynda Wright, November, 1976-March, 1978.

   Community Opportunities for Educational Directions Project, of the North Carolina Human Relations Council, August 31, 1977. (Available free of Charge from Department of Administration/ Human Relations Council/116 W. Jones Street/Raleigh, NC 27603.)

   The Governor's Task Force on Disrupted Youth, Phase I Report, September 14, 1973, Task Force, State Capitol, Tallahassee, Florida.

   Project Student Concerns Interim Report of the Jefferson County Education Consortium, Louisville, Kentucky. September 14, 1977.

   Rates, Reasons, Recommendations, a study of student suspensions by the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission, June, 1976. Linda Jones, Project Coordinator.

   School Suspensions Are They Helping Children? published by the Children's Defense Fund, 1520 New Hampshire Avenue NW Washington, D.C. 20036. September, 1975.

   Title VII Special Student Concerns Interim Report of the Louisiana State Department of Education, Bureau of Technical Assistance, Eugene Limar, Coordinator. November, 1976.

3. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 includes a finding by Congress that "juvenile delinquency can be prevented through programs to keep students in elementary and secondary schools through the prevention of unwarranted and arbitrary suspensions and expulsions."

4. There are a number of publications which describe in-school alternatives to suspension. Programs currently in operation are described in the newsletter Creative Discipline, published by the Southeastern Public Education Program of the American Friends Service Committee during 1977-1978 (available for $7.00 from AFSC-SEPEP 401 Columbia Building, Columbia, S.C. 29201). Other programs are described in materials available from the National Association of Secondary School Principals and other professional organizations.

5. For recommended due process procedures for in-school suspension see Section 9 the plaintiffs proposed discipline code in Morgan v. Kerrigan available from the Children's Defense Fund, 1520 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

   For recommended procedures for temporary removal from class see Section 7.5.5. of the Model Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities available from the Center for Law and Education, 6 Appian Way, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.

   There are a number of potential legal questions surrounding an assignment to an in-school alternative program, and the "rehabilitative" purpose, activities, and effect of the program. See "In-School Suspension Practices and the Prison Hospital Experience" by David K. Wiles and Edward Rockoff in the NOLPE School Law Journal, Volume 7, Number 1, 1977. (Available for $2.50 from NOLPE, 5401 S.W. 7th Avenue, Topeka, Kansas 66606.)

6. Attention needs to be given to the degree of isolation which is desirable in this type of programs. Some programs do not permit students in the program to eat with other students (lunch trays are brought to the in-school program room). Other programs require that students have to go to the bathroom at a time when no other students are in the halls. Students in alternative programs are sometimes prohibited from participation in extracurricular activities that may be held during or at the end of the school day.

7. Schools should be receptive to learning from the experience of the in-school alternative program. In some cases it may be necessary to make significant curriculum and instructional adjustments in the regular school program if it becomes clear the academic needs of some students are not being met. The strong support of the school district's central office may be necessary to help a school determine if, when, and how such adjustments should be made.

8. Some schools have found that because of the personality of the person in charge of the in-school program, and because students in the programs usually receive more individual attention and care than in the regular classroom, some students welcome the opportunity to be assigned to the program. This is most likely to happen when the real problem has not been adequately addressed and the student views the in-school program as a haven. Thus, assignment to the program may be seen by some students as a positive experience and may inadvertently be responsible for students causing problems (so they will be assigned to the in-school program). The occurance of this phenomenon should be anticipated. Careful records should be maintained to determine if the same students are returning to the program over and over and, if so, why.

9. A detailed description of various Federal sources of funding for in-school alternative programs can be found in the April, 1978 issue of Creative Discipline.

10. For example, educators may quit suspending students but begin to routinely refer "behavior problems" for evaluation and placement in programs for the emotionally handicapped or the educable mentally handicapped. The absence or low incidence of suspensions cannot be assumed to indicate the presence of appropriate responses to students with problems.